



Evidence and
Implementation
Summit 2023
9-11 October

Melbourne, Australia & Online



Behavioural and Implementation
Science Interventions
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



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#209 - The perspectives of children, families and teachers on the impact of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone on school travel.

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Objectives/aims

The simultaneous challenges of poor air quality, rising levels of obesity and climate change mean that policy makers are introducing interventions to improve air quality and promote physical activity, such as the introduction of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). To inform existing evaluations of the ULEZ, our qualitative study aimed to understand intervention mechanisms of how the ULEZ might work to change behaviour. Most importantly we wanted understand children's, families' and school teachers' experiences of the school journey at the backdrop of micro, meso and macro policy influences on behaviour, given the complex system and simultaneous implementation of school-based promotion efforts.

Methods

Purposive sampling was used to recruit young people (aged 10-11) and their families from Children's Health in London and Luton (CHILL), a prospective parallel cohort study evaluating the impact of the ULEZ on young people's health. Baseline data were used to oversample participants identified as especially vulnerable to the harms of air pollution (e.g. those from disadvantaged socioeconomic positions). Senior staff and teachers at the schools these young people attended were also recruited, based on their knowledge of the school's transport policy. A mix of in-person and online semi-structured parent-child dyad, and teacher interviews were conducted between November 2022 and April 2023. Data were imported into NVivo software to be analysed following a reflexive thematic analysis approach guided by realist evaluation



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principles. Preliminary findings from our ongoing analysis are presented below, final findings would be presented at the conference.

Main findings

The sample consisted of 21 young people and their parent(s) and 8 teachers. Participants were ethnically diverse and had varying travel behaviours. The following preliminary themes reflect the narratives of all three participant groups: i. experiences of the school journey, ii. impressions of the ULEZ, and iii. impact of the ULEZ.

Participants living in the most traffic-congested central areas reported a positive impact on their experiences of travel and their health, particularly in relation to pollution. Participants with longer journeys described an impact on their travel mode, either being more likely to switch from driving to public transport or park outside the ULEZ and walk the remainder of their journey. Participants discussed school/local (micro) and city-wide policies (meso), including the Congestion Charge and street closures. Whilst these made it difficult to isolate the impact of the ULEZ, when implemented together participants described a noticeable change in car traffic and pollution.

Overall, narratives were in support of the ULEZ, however participants communicated a limited understanding of its implementation. Policy views/recommendations included increased communication from the government on the reinvestment of money from the scheme into London's travel infrastructure and the communication of accessible data on changes in air pollution levels. Participants' experiences highlighted the capacity for the ULEZ to simultaneously reduce and exacerbate inequalities (for example, benefiting those with health conditions such as asthma, whilst making hospital access more challenging), which was further reflected in their policy recommendations.

Conclusion

Our preliminary findings provide insight into participants' differential experiences of the ULEZ and contextual factors which influence these, particularly for more vulnerable groups. Through an exploration of the wider social and policy context of the ULEZ, we help public health professionals to understand and contribute to the often highly contested debates on the implementation of Clean Air Zones in other cities in the United Kingdom, and worldwide.

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